Equality of Opportunity and Freedom from Discrimination

MHR Connections

Published by the Manitoba Human Rights Commission

Volume 15 Number 1 *January 2015*

The struggle and success of Scott Heggart

Scott Heggart is the 2015 Dream Conferences' Keynote Speaker

Scott Heggart is a young man with a story to tell; his story. He also has a message: you can play.

The 21-year-old University student has dedicated his recent years to telling his story about coming out as a homosexual athlete in an effort to make a difference, offer support and spread awareness for young people.

"After years of students requesting sessions on gay and transgender rights, we decided that Scott would be the perfect speaker to address the students," says Pam Roberts, the Manitoba Human Rights Commission's youth conference co-ordinator. "We always ask the students attending our conference what topics they would like in the future and this has always been one of the top topics. Scott is a role model for many."

Scott's story provides hope to those young people who feel so alone. He admits as a society there is still work to be done before homosexual people are completely accepted. For Scott, talking about it and helping others understand, he is now completely free to be himself.

To get there he did something very few have the courage to do. He documented his own struggles and each day for an entire year, he posted an anonymous YouTube video in which he described his everyday life as a young gay man.

After struggling with his own sexuality as a youth, Scott is committed to telling his personal story of acceptance. He is an ambassador with *You Can Play*, an international organization committed to inclusion and diversity in sports. *You Can Play* is proud to be a partner of the CFL and the NHL.

After making the videos he started getting messages from people just thanking him. Many of these personal messages brought him to tears. Scott's YouTube channel now has some 3,000 subscribers and has been viewed more than 600,000 times.

continued on page 2

THE MANITOBA HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

LA COMMISSION DES DROITS DE LA PERSONNE DU MANITOBA

www.manitobahumanrights.ca

The Rights Connection
by Azim Jiwa - Executive Director

After a McLean's Magazine claimed that Winnipeg maybe the most racist city in Canada, some either admitted there was a problem or felt hurt by such accusations. To deny that racism exists does not further the discussion; nor does suggesting other cities are even worse. Looking for solutions is the only way to move on. The Human Rights Commission is here to help.

We have reported an increase in complaints based on ancestry including Aboriginal people over the last few years. We are however, painfully aware that these complaints just scratch the surface.

The Commission wants the Aboriginal Community, or any other community that faces racism, to know that *The Human Rights Code* exists to help protect people from discrimination. Anyone who experiences discrimination in housing, employment or discrimination that prevents you from shopping or entering business establishments should contact The Manitoba Human Rights Commission.

As for the public at large, hearing example after example of street racism is disturbing and certainly should not be ignored.

This is where our many education and awareness programs and outreach activities can help. We are and will continue to be part of the solution by informing everyone of their rights and responsibilities, and how destructive racism, or any form of discrimination, can be to a business, school or community.

The mandate of The Manitoba Human Rights Commission is to promote and educate the public about human rights in this province and to enforce the anti-discrimination provisions of *The Human Rights Code*. The Commission investigates complaints to determine if there is enough evidence to require a public hearing. The Commission also mediates complaints, facilitating voluntary resolutions and remedies between the parties. The Commission has both policies and guidelines reflecting its interpretation of *The Code*.

As part of its promoting and educating of human rights mandate, The Commission has education seminars for employers and property owners; has annual youth conferences, holds public consultations and has many outreach activities on all topics covered by *The Human Rights Code*.

Visit our website for information on rights and responsibilities and how to file a complaint, or call toll free 1-888-884-8681.

continued from page 1

The Manitoba Human Rights Commission is looking forward to meeting this remarkable young man. He is the keynote speaker at this year's DREAM Human Rights Conferences, which will be held in April in Winnipeg and Shilo. On a video posted on the Commission's Facebook page, Scott says he is excited to talk and listen to the students who are attending the conferences.
https://www.facebook.com/ManitobaHumanRightsCommission

Scott Heggart's videos are posted on his YouTube channel, big93scott.

The Manitoba Human Rights Commission
2015 DREAM Youth Conferences

Register Today—Deadline, March 7, 2015!
www.manitobahumanrights.ca

Shilo (April 8, 2015) OR Winnipeg (April 09, 2015)
bring up to six students from grades 7 & 8 to this
FREE Human Rights Conference
Questions? Call 204-726-6262
Email: hrc@gov.mb.ca

Discover your rights and responsibilities
Realize the power of one
Express yourself
Act – speak up, help others
Motivate – encourage others

2015 Workshops:

Animals at WORK
Manitoba, like many other provinces and territories, has human rights laws preventing discrimination against service animal users.

Scenes from a Hat - Improv Human Rights Style
Just like in life… you never know what's going to happen. Discrimination & harassment can happen anywhere – at school, at a store, at work. In this workshop, you'll draw a "scene from the hat" and your group will create a short skit (complete with costumes and props) about a possible discrimination or harassment scenario.

Let's Talk About It
Let's go beyond just talking about concerns and look at how students can become part of a support structure for LGBT youth in their own lives, and ways in which negative language, attitudes and behaviour can be challenged in order to create safe spaces for all young people, regardless of sexual orientation.

Human Rights seminar gets straight "A"s

A pilot human rights seminar *"Investigation – Tips Tricks and Techniques"* has received high marks from participants for both the content and Pam Roberts, the facilitator and Human Rights Officer.

"We usually get very good reviews of our seminars but this new one was exceptional," says the Commission's Assistant Director and Education Manager George Sarides. "The evaluation of the course was rated on content, relevancy and the facilitator and received a score of 73 out of 75." Comments ranged from 'perfect' and 'an opportunity to apply knowledge during the course' to simply a 'great presentation.'

According to *The Code*, as soon as someone in a position of authority becomes reasonably aware of potential harassment the business needs to take reasonable steps to stop it and to prevent further harassment from occurring. Recent Manitoba sexual harassment adjudications have reinforced that businesses must take this obligation seriously.

Human Rights Officer and facilitator of the course Pam Roberts noted that "reasonable steps" may look very different based on the situation, the type of complaint or the business. "This course teaches tips and tricks that will assist employers meet this obligation, using a realistic case scenario that the group works through."

"Taking these reasonable steps is important for two reasons," says Ms Roberts. "Foremost it will help an employer identify and determine what is happening in its workplace, which will help identify necessary corrections to ensure a safe, respectful workplace for all employers. Employers may discover behaviours that do not necessarily meet *The Code's* definition of harassment, could potentially violate their own respectful workplace policies or simply not be conducive to a positive working environment."

She also emphasized that being able to prove that you took reasonable steps is necessary to defend a business's position should a human rights complaint be filed. "The goal of this course is to give employers the tools they need to take reasonable steps themselves so that harassment can be stopped and a human rights complaint isn't necessary."

This pilot course followed a three hour seminar on harassment,and the combination of the two gives employers and managers very strong tools.

The Commission also offers human rights workplace seminars on *Reasonable Accommodation*, *Mental Health Issues* and *The Business of Human Rights* which gives an overall view of the *Human Rights Code* and employers'/ employees' rights and responsibilities.

For more information and how to register for these seminars, visit the Commission's website and click on workshops/seminars.